

Reclaim Education

Notes on the global struggle

Uniting for "Global Weeks of Action for Education" this November!

Pupils, students, teachers, parents and workers worldwide are struggling against the increasing commercialization of education and for free emancipatory education for all. Everywhere similar symptoms of the currently dominating economic system - such as the introduction (and increase) of tuition fees, an increasing de-democratization and opening up of institutions for private economic actors - can be observed within the education system. This month (September) alone saw partly massive resistance linked to our struggle in Bangladesh, Chile, Colombia, Egypt, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Kenya, on the Philippines, in Spain, the UK, Ukraine and U.S. of A.

The economic system unleashes its forces globally, so it is about time to connect and unite in our struggle globally as well. This will also strengthen all of us on the local level.

After several global chat meetings on the ISM platform activists in various regions of the world decided to declare November 07 - 20th Global Weeks of Action for Education (GWA). Furthermore

November 17th shall mark a peak of the GWA with synchronized actions worldwide.

The framework of the GWA consists of three elements. Firstly the basis is de-

scribed by the "international joint statement". In addition for everyone to easily communicate that their activities are linked to the GWA to people on the local and global level activists agreed on common suggestions for slogans (such as: "education is not for



\$A€€; one world - one struggle", "free education for emancipation; one world - one struggle" and "for the social revolution; one world - one struggle") as well as symbols (the three you find on this page). As you can see, the essential part is "one world - one struggle".

To bring the actions everywhere linked to the GWA closer together and improve the flow of information, some ideas were collected by participants of previous chat meetings. For example groups worldwide could set up "livestreams" (which will be collected on one page); activists could arrange "live" broadcasts of protests or include a video chat with a fellow activist elsewhere during a rally or workshop; everyone can consider to record

a short video explaining ones local/regional situation and deliver greetings to fellow activists worldwide, which can then be shown on November 17th everywhere; all should feel encouraged to take many pictures and videos of any activities linked to the GWA

displaying the common slogans and/or symbols (it can be all put together in a presentation afterwards). To prepare things for the GWA activists began to discuss ideas for a "social media newsroom", with

which we will attempt to bring together all the information related to the GWA activities worldwide (in real time). All who want these efforts are invited to subscribe to the ISM techies mailing list (to be found on the ISM website).

During global chat meetings in the coming weeks activists will continue discussions on how to synchronize activities on November 17th. They are announced on the ISM (global) mailing list and the website. All identifying with the struggle are invited to participate! Communication and the flow of information on the global level is vital!

Also if you don't organize any activities linked to the GWA, do make use of the ISM communication infrastruc-

ture to inform people worldwide about your local/regional situation and protests, for example by sending reports to the ISM (global) mailing list.

Those who want to help can, for example, offer to do translations of the joint statement and/or the announcement for the GWA, create a mobilization video, design suggestions for posters and/or help to inform groups and activists around the world about the GWA. Of course it is important that as many of you as possible also participate in the chat meetings and announce your activities linked to the GWA in advance, so everything can be put on the website and inspire all of us everywhere!

Among others groups in Canada, across Germany as well as the U.S. of A., in Indonesia, Liberia and the Philippines confirmed to arrange activities such as strikes and rallies linked to the GWA so far. Others, for example, in Bangladesh, Chile, Egypt, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Pakistan and many other regions are still discussing it.

For you to get involved and stay in touch with the coordination efforts on the global level, subscribe to the ISM (global) mailing list. To announce activities linked to the GWA and to clarify questions, you can participate

in the next global chat meeting. Send a message to the mailing list or address it to united.for.education@gmail.com! Latest details on the GWA are available on ism-global.net

★ one world - one struggle ★



About this newsletter

This newsletter is part of the communication infrastructure of the independent platform International Student Movement (ISM). The ISM is being used and shaped by individuals and groups around the world who are struggling against the increasing commercialisation of education and for free emancipatory education for all.

This newsletter is the result of voluntary work done by a few individuals who are passionate about the cause. The positions expressed are not in any way representative for any group or the ISM as a whole.

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Students Resisting State Abandonment of Public Education in Dhaka

The government of Bangladesh introduced a new funding rule (article 27(4)) which forces Jagannath University (JnU) to generate its own funds by 2012. In other words, this "public" institution will not be financed nor be accessible by the general public anymore.

Consequently there are two potential sources for funds to be explored by the university: fees and private investors. Students now expect that semester fees will increase by 600% (previously: 3,500 BDT = 34€ = 47US\$ - soon: 20,000 BDT = 195€ = 266US\$).

At this stage only JnU is directly affected - it seems like an experiment. If this transformation succeeds, then at least two other universities are to fol-

low by 2017.

The public was informed about these changes through a newspaper report on Sept. 25. As a direct reaction thousands of students began to block roads around campus and the High Court, demanding that the new rule be scrapped again. Police were called in and charged protesters with batons to disperse the crowd. Demands of the students also include the reinstatement of university dormitories, the setting up of a library, and the improvement of transport facilities as well as the closure of a branch of Bangladesh Bank on campus.

On Sunday itself and in the following days dozens of activists were violently arrested, many were injured. In reaction about 60 cars were smashed,



barricades built and tyres burnt near campus. On Tuesday (Sept. 27) students announced to go on strike, boycotting classes and exams. The institution will now remain closed at least until Oct. 6.

This development is a symptom of the currently dominating economic system and part of the commercialisation process within education. According to latest reports however, the government stated they would reconsider their decision due to the protests. This is the future for all of us around the world - unless we finally connect and fight back together!

More details, pictures and videos on www.ism-global.net

News Bulletin

To get an impression of the global dimension of our struggle for free education, here is a little overview of protests around the world in September alone!

- Student activists squatted building at the University of California in Berkeley (U.S.A.) for a day on Sept. 22: "We've come together to call for a halt to the destruction of our public schools, and to insist that education be universally accessible and free. But today we are not simply pressing demands; we're also working collectively to reclaim our campus, to make it a little more public and a little less estranged from us." At night the space was violently evicted - two students were arrested and one badly beaten by police.

- On Sept. 22-23 students rallied in

Kiev (Ukraine) to protest a meeting of education ministers from across Europe held by the Ukrainian government. Protesters oppose the increasing commercialisation of education in the Ukraine and across Europe. The official counter forum "Another Side of Education" was prohibited by the authorities. At several stages activists were detained by police forces.

- Students from across Scotland staged sit-ins at different institutions, like Edinburgh University, to protest £36,000 tuition fees for students from England, Northern Ireland and Wales - demanding free education for all.

- In Bangladesh thousands of students rallied at Rajshahi University, Dhaka University as well as Jagannath University to resist increasing fees. The situation is especially drastic at Jagannath University - dozens were arrested and students declared a strike on Sept. 27 (see p.1).

- Students and teachers went on strike at public colleges and universities across the Philippines between Sept. 19-23 to resist budget cuts and the increasing commercialisation of education. As part of the strike 20,000 people took to the streets across the country on Friday.

- On Sept. 11 students and staff at the American University of Cairo (Egypt) went into strike to resist increasing tuition fees and fight for proper minimum wages at the institution among others. Parts of the campus were squatted.

- On Sept. 9 teachers blocked the Nairobi-Naivasha highway in Kenya in protest against 20,000 teachers to be employed annually on contract basis instead of permanent basis.

- Hundreds of pupils squatted schools in Bremen (Germany) on different days to protest budget cuts and struggle for proper democratic struc-

tures in schools.

- Across Colombia students and teachers went on strike on Sept. 7 to resist a new law opening up public universities for private investments. Students rallying near Universidad Distrital de Bogotá campus were massively attacked by police forces on Sept. 22 - 8 were arrested and 20 injured.

- On Sept. 6 activists of the Free Education for Everyone (FEE) group staged a "direct action" in Galway (Ireland) blocking cabinet ministers heading to a parliamentary meeting. Some ministers kicked off a discussion on the re-introduction of tuition fees recently again. On Sept. 14 hundreds protested at the Dail (Ireland) against cuts to education resources to special needs children.

- In the struggle for free education hundreds of thousands gathered for rallies in Santiago (Chile) on Sept. 2,

14, 22 and 29. Often protesters were attacked and detained by riot police.

- New education laws were passed in Greece, which will result in an increasing de-democratisation at universities, cuts and paving the way for private investments in educational institutions, scrapping university asylum, further restricting the timeframe within which students are supposed to graduate and other steps towards an increasing commercialisation of education. In reaction students have been squatting more than 200 university departments and 400 high schools during the complete month of September. Thousands joined rallies opposing these laws in Athens and Thessaloniki several times.

Complete overview with more details, many pictures and videos: www.ism-global.net/protests_worldwide_sept2011